

VZCZCXRO3318
PP RUEHAST
DE RUEHHE #0994/01 2711343
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 281343Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2538
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HELSINKI 000994

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EUR FOR DAS PEKALA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OTRA](#) [SENV](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [FI](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR EUR DAS PEKALA'S VISIT TO HELSINKI, OCTOBER
4 - 6

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Summary and Introduction

¶1. Half way through its EU Presidency, Finland has proven to be the behind-the-scenes negotiator we expected rather than the more out-in-front leader we might have preferred. Often valuing consensus above all, the Finns have been unusually content to see the Commission take the lead on many issues of transatlantic importance including Passenger Name Records (PNR) and the High Level Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development. This has at times caused friction in our relationship, which has been exacerbated by President Halonen's and FM Tuomioja's unhelpful statements to the press, especially concerning the Middle East.

¶2. The Middle East Crisis has further distracted the Finns from the agenda they had hoped to implement during their presidency -- an agenda that held the potential to advance US interests and goals in many areas, including Darfur, the Middle East, Kosovo, Cuba, Russia, Belarus and Asia. At this point, US goals -- both bilaterally and for the EU Presidency -- would be best advanced were the GOF return to that stated agenda. We should continue to support Finnish efforts to work quietly behind the scenes to facilitate U.S. - EU cooperation, while recognizing that Finland will be reluctant to embrace U.S. initiatives that could put it on a collision course with counterpart EU governments or the Brussels bureaucracy. (End Summary)

While You're Here...

¶3. While the bulk of your time will be spent at the two-day Chief of Mission program, we have scheduled meetings with Political Director Pilvi-Sisko Vierros-Villeneuve and DG for the Department of the Americas and Asia Elina Kalkku. We have also scheduled some in-house events with Embassy staff and an on-the-record press event. During your visit we recommend you:

--thank Finnish interlocutors for the role they played on Lebanon and Iran and encourage continued constructive engagement with the U.S. going forward;

--welcome Finnish participation in NATO operations - particularly notable given that Finland is not a NATO member;

--encourage Finnish efforts to promote democracy in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Caucasus;

--thank the Finns for working effectively to ensure that the HLD achieves an appropriate balance between energy and environment.

Middle East/Iran/Afghanistan

14. Despite his occasionally unhelpful comments in the media, FM Tuomioja actually played an important behind-the-scenes role by supporting the French negotiations with the U.S. that produced UNSCR 1701; by pressing larger EU member states to make significant troop contributions; and by pressing domestically for a Finnish contribution of 240 troops. He delivered tough messages to Syria and Iran, warning them not to act as "spoilers" of the peace process. The Finns have also maintained a hard yet constructive line on Iran, and they remain supportive of UNSC sanctions if Iran does not halt enrichment and come to the negotiating table. Although not a member of the coalition in Iraq, Finland has supported EU efforts there and sent a trainer to Jordan to train Iraqi police.

The HLD on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development

15. The U.S. and EU have struggled to shape the agenda of the first High Level Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development. The U.S. has pushed for a meeting that would seek to find synergies between energy policy goals and actions on addressing climate change, while the Commission has resisted this approach, preferring the more traditional, yet often unhelpful discussion that has characterized climate change talks in the past. Finland supports our approach, but ever mindful of it what it believes is its duty to suppress national goals in support of EU coordination, it has pressed quietly behind the scenes, and at times has seemed bullied by the Commission. You will want to welcome the co-chair role they have assigned their Minister of Trade and Industry, and encourage them to facilitate high-level German Ministry of Energy participation in order to empower fresh perspectives on this issue.

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Peacekeeping and NATO/PfP

16. Although not a NATO member (and most likely not to embrace membership in the near future), the GOF is very proud of its close cooperation with NATO through PfP and its substantial participation in NATO operations. We recommend that you tell the Finns that Washington recognizes and appreciates the Finnish tendency to "punch above its weight" in international peacekeeping operations. Finland has some 350 troops under NATO command in Kosovo and another 100 ISAF troops in Afghanistan. It has declined our request to donate lethal weapons to Afghanistan, citing "legal considerations." Its other commitments include EU operations in Bosnia, and soon, Lebanon. Although a Finnish officer was killed in Lebanon during the recent conflict, notably, almost no one in the Finnish government, opposition, or media used this as an excuse to oppose GOF efforts to send 240 troops to the enhanced UNIFIL operation. Portions of the GOF appear interested in the evolution of the "enhanced PfP" proposal that will be discussed in Riga.

Democracy Promotion

17. In the past, the Finns played a key role in helping the Baltic states make the transition and necessary reforms for EU and NATO membership. Now, they are beginning to turn their attention further eastward. While promoting democracy in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Caucasus is more challenging than the Baltics were, we are encouraged by several signs, including Finnish support for NGOs in Russia; political support for opposition candidates and civil society in Belarus; and President Halonen's contacts with pro-democracy leaders in Georgia and Ukraine. Your encouragement of these efforts - and expressions of our high hopes for the upcoming

EU-Ukraine Summit and EU Head of State informal (which Putin will attend as a guest) will help keep the GOF involved in advancing the Frontiers of Freedom.

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